

CHAPTER 250

AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Task Force on Lupus Education and Awareness in the Department of Health.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
 - a. It is estimated that as many as 43,000 New Jersey residents suffer from lupus, a lifelong autoimmune disease in which the immune system becomes unbalanced, causing inflammation, tissue damage, seizures, strokes, heart attacks, miscarriages, and organ failure;
 - b. Although anyone can develop lupus, it strikes mostly women of childbearing age, and African-American, Latina, Asian and Native American women are two to three times more likely than Caucasians to develop lupus;
 - c. Lupus can be difficult to diagnose, and often is misdiagnosed because the symptoms are similar to those of other illnesses; and
 - d. It is in the public interest for this State to establish an entity to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to improve education and awareness about lupus for health care providers and the general public.

2. There is established the New Jersey Task Force on Lupus Education and Awareness within the Department of Health.
 - a. The task force shall include five members as follows:
 - (1) The Commissioner of Health, or the commissioner's designee, as an ex officio member;
 - (2) four public members, appointed by the Governor, who are residents of this State, including: one person who has been diagnosed with lupus and has been recommended by the Lupus Foundation of America, New Jersey Chapter, Inc.; one representative of the Lupus Foundation of America, New Jersey Chapter, Inc.; and two other members of the public.
 - b. Vacancies in the membership of the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.
 - c. The members of the task force shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for any expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties, subject to the availability of funds.
 - d. The task force shall organize as soon as practicable after the appointment of its members and shall select a chairperson from among its members.
 - e. The task force shall be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau, commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available to perform its duties.

3. The purpose of the task force shall be to ensure that a comprehensive lupus education and awareness plan is implemented in the State for health care providers and the general public.
 - a. The task force shall conduct an initial assessment of the state of education on lupus in the State.
 - b. Based on the assessment required pursuant to subsection a. of this section, the task force shall develop information on lupus that is endorsed by government agencies, including, but not limited to, the National Institutes of Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Department of Health shall post the information that the task force develops on its Internet website. Subject to available appropriations, the department

may distribute this information to individuals with lupus, their family members, health care professionals, hospitals, local health departments, schools, agencies on aging, employers, health plans, women's health groups, and nonprofit and community-based organizations.

c. The task force shall develop a directory of lupus-related health care services, which shall be made available on the Internet website of the Department of Health, and shall include a list of health care providers who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of lupus.

4. The task force shall report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), no later than one year after the date of its initial meeting, on the task force's activities and may include any recommendations for legislative action that it deems appropriate.

5. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon the issuance of the task force report.

Approved January 17, 2014.